

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 072560
ORIGIN EA-04

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /005 R

66011

DRAFTED BY: EA/TB:RMGIBSON:MGH

APPROVED BY: EA/TB:JJHELBLE

-----021116Z 031668 /17

R 020954Z APR 77

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY RANGOON

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE STATE 072560

FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE FROM BANGKOK MARCH 30:

QUOTE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BANGKOK 6801

CHIANG MAI 116 DATED 290649Z MAR 77 SENT TO BANGKOK BEING
REPEATED TO YOU FOR YOUR INFO:

QTE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE CHIANG MAI 116

REF: (A) BANGKOK 6673, (B) BANGKOK 6551, (C) BANGKOK 6091

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MOPS, TH, PM

SUBJECT: BURMESE SHELLIG OF THAI VILLAGE

SUMMARY: TAK GOVERNOR REPORTS THAT 15 WERE KILLED AND
AROUND FIFTY INJURED IN THE BURMESE SHELLING OF BAN WANG
KHA.

1. GOVERNOR KUSON SARNTITHAM TOLD ME IN A VONCERSATION

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IN TAK PROVINCE YESTERDAY THAT THERE WERE FITEEN CONFIRMED
DEATHS IN THE BURMESE ARMY SHELLING OF BAN WANG KHA LAST
WEEK. THREE OF THOSE DIED IN THE HOSPITAL, THE OTHER BODIES
WERE FOUND AT THE SCENE. THE GOVERNOR ESTIMATES THAT ABOUT
FIFTY PEOPLE WERE INJURED, THIRTY-FIVE OF THOSE "SERIOUSLY".

2. BAN WANG KHA WAS NOT MUCH MORE THAN A MARKET PLACE

ON A RIVER BANK, IT'S MAJOR CUSTOMERS, KARENS AND BURMESE LIVING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RIVER. THE GOVERNOR REPORTS THAT TWENTY OR MORE SHELLS FELL INTO THE MARKET AREA COMPLETELY DESTROYING IT. OF THOSE KILLED, THE GOVERNOR ESTIMATES THAT "ONLY FOUR OR FIVE" WERE ETHNIC THAI. THE REST WERE KAREN, MON, AND BURMESE.

3. LOOKING AT A MAP OF THE AREA AND THE PICTURES OF THE DESTRUCTION, IT IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND HOW AN ARTILLERY BARRAGE COULD OVERFLY THE TARGET BY ABOUT TWO HUNDRED YARDS AND FALL ON THE THAI SIDE OF THE RIVER. IN THE GOVERNOR'S PICTURES OF THE DESTRUCTION, THE BUILDINGS THAT WERE SUPPOSEDLY THE TARGET ARE CLEARLY VISIBLE IN THE BACKGROUND, STILL STANDING. HOWEVER THE GOVERNOR, AS WELL AS OTHER SOURCES WITH WHOM WE TALKED, REPORT THAT MOST PEOPLE IN TAK BELIEVE THE ATTACK WAS DELIBERATE. EVEN SO, THE DESTRUCTION OF BAN WANG KHA DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED ANTI-BURMESE SENTIMENT IN THE AREA. SUCH ANTI-BURMESE SENTIMENT IS ALREADY SO STRONG THAT THE INCIDENT ONLY SERVED TO REENFORCE PREVAILING SENTIMENT.

4. ON SATURDAY, THE THAI MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TRAVELED TO TAK FOR AN ONSITE INVESTIGATION OF THE DAMAGE. HOWEVER, HE NEVER MADE IT TO MAE SOT AS THE ATTEMPTED COUP FORCED HIS IMMEDIATE RETURN TO BANGKOK. TANNER UNQTE BURKE UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BOMBING, BORDER INCIDENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 02-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE072560
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: EA/TB:RMGIBSON:MGH
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770114-0465
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770495/aaaadexl.tel
Line Count: 88
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 64828bab-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BANGKOK 6673, 77 BANGKOK 6551, 77 BANGKOK 6091
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2919146
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BURMESE SHELLIG OF THAI VILLAGE
TAGS: PFOR, MOPS, TH, BM
To: RANGOON
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/64828bab-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009